



## Temple Beth Israel welcomes four new members to their community

The Jewish community of Aruba is a small but dedicated group under the guidance of Rabbi Marcelo Bater, but it is growing. On Monday evening, June 26, the congregation, lead by Rabbi Bater welcomed four new members to “the fold,” members that had studied hard and devoted nearly two years to being converted to the Jewish faith.

It was a very touching moment for the four and all the members of the community that joined them for the conversion service as they held the Torah in their hands and read with great emotion the *Shema*, the simple statement that says “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one,” in Hebrew. Of varying ages and professions, some still young students, these four finally saw their wish realized, to join the faith that for some had been the faith of their distant ancestors.

Freddy Maduro, Claudia Ponson-Daher, Rechinella Wever and Jhonatan Ruez received hugs and kisses from all those present that were happy to receive them into the faith. The laws of Judaism require that those wishing to join must face a board of three Rabbis, so Temple Beth Israel welcomed Rabbi Daniel Dolinsky of Venezuela and Rabbi Gustavo Draselnik of Panama who traveled to Aruba for the occasion. After passing the course of study and the tests required to become Jewish, Freddy, Claudia, Richinella and Jhaonatan preformed the ritual bath, a *Mikvah*, in the Caribbean Sea, and then finally received their certificates from the board of three rabbis.

Each candidate had their own very personal reasons for wishing to join the Jewish faith, but they shared a gratitude to Martha Lichtenstein, an active temple member and mentor, and Rabbi Bater who provided the religious instruction, for their assistance. Claudia, representing the group, presented them with beautiful bouquets in thank you at the finish of the ceremony. Rabbi Kraselnik then said the prayer over the Challah and the celebrating began, with dishes prepared by the temple members, a time honored tradition at Temple Beth Israel.

The entire congregation offers a *Mazel Tov* to the new members for the successful completion of their studies and welcomes them to the community.